

Shastiabdhapoorthi



Compiled by
Dr V V Parthasarathy

Dhanvanthari - தன்வந்தரி



अच्युतानन्द गोविन्द विष्णो नारायणामृत।
रोगान्मे नाशयाशेषान् आशु धन्वन्तरे हरे॥

achyuthaananda govinda vishno naaraayanaamrutha
rogaanme naasayaaseshaan aasu dhanvanthare hare

அச்சுதானந்த கோவிந்த விஷ்ணோ நாராயணாம்ருத
ரோகான்மே நாசயாசேஷான் ஆசு தன்வந்தரே ஹரே

O Lord Achyuta in the form of bliss, O Govinda, O Vishnu, O Narayana in the form of Nectar, O Dhanvanthari, O Lord Hari, please destroy all my diseases quickly.

ஹே அச்சுதா, ஆனந்தமயமானவனே, கோவிந்தா, விஷ்ணுவே, அம்ருதத்தை உடைய நாராயணனே, தன்வந்தரியே, ஹே ஹரியே, என்னுடைய எல்லா நோய்களையும் நாசம் செய்து விடுவாயாக.

Front Wrapper

Kalyanasundareswarar and His Consort Kokilaambal, as seen in Thirumanancheri. Thirumananjeri is located 5 Km from Kuthalam, Thanjavur district and 15 Km from Mayiladuthurai, in Tamilnadu.

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SHASHTIABDHAPOORTHI

Introduction

Turning sixty is a social-religious event in India, especially in South India. When a man turns sixty, it is not just another birthday that is to be celebrated with usual greetings, gifts, cards, flowers, cake and candles. While it may include all that, it also calls for no less than a sacred vedic celebration called Shashtiabdhapoorthi. 'Shashti' being 60, 'Abdham' the year, with 'Poorthi' signifying the completion of 60 years in a man's lifetime. Shashtiabdhapoorthi is a family event, when a remarriage of the couple, is performed. This unusual custom marked by rituals, reverberating with the 'manthras' is spiritually and mentally rejuvenating for a couple who are 'graduageing'. It is also a happy event that reinforces the existing bond between the man and his wife and is expressed in the unusual custom of a remarriage of the couple watched fondly by a retinue of children, grandchildren, relatives and friends. This social event reflects a continuity in the family.

According to Vedas, it is believed that the actual span of life of an individual is 120 years and at sixty, one had crossed only 50% of the life span. It is thought that at sixty the ruling planet of a person may have an adverse effect on his life. He performs a religious Shanthi, a measure undertaken to ensure good health, peace and longevity.

How does one feel to be sixty? For most of us it is conscious ageing, an increasing awareness that though the body is ephemeral, the spirit on the contrary, can soar! It can take us through hitherto unexplored paths. Sixty is certainly a time when man pauses to take stock of the life gone by. He begins a new chapter in life, unfettered by professional commitments.



Now he is free to answer his own inner call for things beyond the material domain. In this frame of mind, he is equipped to combat the physical fatigue that sets in with age. For the mentally alert, it is a time for thinking about the new options in life. It is a wonderful chance of using one's freedom from the daily grind in office for pleasurable and spiritually nourishing activities. In this process, he sets an example to his family and the society.

Celebration of Shashtiabdhapoorthi

It is usually organized by the couple's children, younger siblings and grandchildren. In addition to various poojas, part of the wedding ceremony is re-enacted. Elders who have already celebrated such events bless the couple. These couple in turn bless the younger ones. For some, celebrations include, making donations for worthy causes, creating endowments, etc. To ward off all evils that may affect the couple in the continuing years, it is customary to perform various Shanthi Homams and Yagnaas with the help of learned Purohits. It is believed that soon after the completion of the first cycle of sixty years, certain evil forces (*dushta grahas*) would affect the person and his near ones (*Sashti Samvatsara - Our Samvatsara Cycle consists of 60 years starting from Prabhava, Vibhava, etc.*). To ward off from these evil forces and fear from Bhootha, Pretha, Mruthyu (*from ghosts, death, etc*) and to get rid of all sins acquired till then, Shashtiabdhapoorthi karma is performed. During this shanthi ritual, one seeks from the God, good health and complete life span (*poorna aayul*), for himself as well as for his family members.

Shashtiabdhapoorthi Rituals

The performance of rituals vary from sect to sect and some follow established family practices. However, the following steps are generally performed by many. In some families the rituals start 5 to 10 days ahead. A pot of water is sanctified by chanting manthras invoking the family deity, both in



the morning and evening. This water is used later for further rituals on the muhurtham day. With some minor differences from family to family, the steps followed on the muhurtham day is generally as follows :

- 1 Anugnai (*seeking permission to start*)
- 2 Vishvaksena or Ganesa Pooja
- 3 Punyahavachanam (*purification of the place and the items used*)
- 4 Kalasa sthabhanam (*invoking the Devathas in pots*)
- 5 Shashtiabdhapoorthi Japa
- 6 Shashtiabdhapoorthi Shanthi Homams including one for Praayaschitta (*homam for commission and omission*)
- 7 Sahasradhara Abhishekam (*pouring purified water over the couple - mangala snaanam*)
- 8 Vasthradharanam (*wearing of new clothes*)
- 9 Kannadi la paakkardhu (*seeing in the mirror*)
- 10 Yennai la paakkardhu (*seeing in the oil*)
- 11 Maangalya Dharanam (*tying of Maangalya Sutra*)
- 12 Paying Obeisance to Lord (*Perumaal mariyaadhai*)
- 13 Akshadhai Aaseervaadham (*blessings by elders*)
- 14 Blessings to relatives and friends (*blessings by the couple*)
- 15 Perumaal, Aalwars (*in the case of Vaishnavaites*) Aachaarya (*gurus and teachers*) Sambaavanai (*paying respects to the Lord and teachers with cash to be sent to the respective temples or mutts*)



- 16 Sambandhi Sambaavanai (*gifts to parents of son-in-law & daughter - in-law*)
- 17 Brhaspathi Sambaavanai (*paying respects to the one who conducted the entire procedure*).

After these steps are completed, Mangala Aarthi is taken and the rituals come to an end.

Devathas invoked in the rituals

Generally the following deities are invoked in the Kalasams (*kumbhams or pots*) during the rituals : Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirruthi, Varuna, Vaayu, Soma, Eesana, Brahma, Vishnu, Ugra Rathaakya Rudra (*Amrutha Mruthyunjaya*), Markandeya, Saptha Rishis, Arunthathi, Shashti Samvatsara Devathas, Saptha Chiranjeevees, Nakshathra Devathas, Vrudha Maatha, Gowri, Durga, Mangala Devatha, Navagraha Devatha, etc.

Punyahavachanam

Like all other auspicious functions, this ritual also starts with punyahavachanam (*purification ritual*), when the chief purohit along with few other assistants chant manthras for purification of the whole place. A platform of bricks is laid for the vedic rituals. A small pot with water is kept on rice spread over a plantain leaf. The pot is wrapped by a cloth (*vasthram*).

Significance: The pot is considered as the Lord Himself. The rice acts like a throne for the Lord. The wrapping of the pot with the cloth signifies the clothing of Lord. The water that is held in the pot is now holy, due to the invocaion of the Lord by the chanting of the manthras.

Kalasa sthabhanam

The number of Kalasams used may be 60 or 33 or 12, as per the family practice.



When 60 kalasams are used, the distribution of kalasams for devathas is as follows: Amrutha Mruthyunjaya(1), Brahma(1), Vishnu(1), Rudra(1), Markandeya(1), Ashta Dik Devatha like Indra, etc(8), Navagraha(9), Chiranjeevee(7), Ayurdevatha(1), Nakshathra Devatha(28), Samvatsara Devatha(1), and Saptha Rishi(1).

After placing kalasams over Dhaanyas (Grains) like, paddy, rice, wheat, black til, etc., purohits invoke the devathas with vedic manthras. Shodasa Upachara Pooja (*16 ways of Pooja*) is performed.

Shashtiabdhapoorthi Japa & Homams

As the preparatory rituals take place, groups of purohits keep chanting portions from the four Vedas simultaneously. These chantings invoke the blessings of the Lord and the devathas. During the chanting, the male member holds one end of darbai (*a type of grass*) while the other end is placed on the kalasam. The idea here is that the sanctifying power of the vedas chanted is being transferred through this connection to the water in the pot and this water is now considered holy. Sukthas like Purusha, Narayana, Vishnu, Sri, Bhoo, Neela, Pavamaana, Varuna, Rudra, Durga, Mruthyu, Ayushya, Baagya and Manthras like, Thryambaka, Gayathri, Dik Palaka, Sri Rudram, and Chamakam are also chanted. This Japa concludes with Nakshathra Suktham, Grutha Suktham, Pancha Shaanthi and Ghosha Shaanthi. In some places first panchathi from each of the 44 anuvakas from the Yajur Veda Samhitha are also chanted. The homams performed include, Navagraha (*praying to all planets for the well-being*), Dhanvanthri (*praying for good health*), Sudharsana (*for total wellbeing*) and Mruthyunjaya (*praying for longevity*).

The choice of the homams, japas and manthras vary from sect to sect and depend on certain family traditions. They also depend on the availability of the expert purohits, time and financial resources. Most of the saivites perform the ritual, Rudra Ekadasi, previous day.



Sahasradhara Abhishekam (*Mangala Snaanam*)

During this ritual, the holy water from the kalasam is poured over the couple through a sieve, in which several auspicious items are placed. The couple is considered as the Divya Dhampathis (*the Lord and His Consort*) and the abhishekam is performed. After the purohit pours a few drops symbolically, family members starting from the eldest pour the holy water on the couple. A little water is left *behind to be sprinkled over the near and dear ones* who attend the function.

The auspicious items used for the mangala snaanam include the following :

- 1 Gorochanam (*Scented dhruvayam to be applied on the head*)
- 2 Dhadhi (*Curd to be applied in the forehead*)
- 3 Grutham (*Ghee to be applied on the eye lids*)
- 4 Dharbai (*Blade of Grass to be placed on the head*)
- 5 Go Ksheera (*Cow's Milk to be sprinkled on head*)
- 6 Phala (*Fruits to be touched with hands*)
- 7 Pushpam (*Flowers to be placed on the head*)
- 8 Mirror (*Mirror to view*)
- 9 Deepam (*The lighted lamp to be shown*)
- 10 Mrth (*Mud from beneath the tulasi plant to be touched*)
- 11 Hiranyam (*A gold coin or article to be placed on the head*)

By this Mangala Snaanam, one is praying for poorna aayul (*complete life*), good health, fame, courage, prosperity, good appearance, strength, fulfillment of all desires, gaining of knowledge and removal of all sins and diseases.

Vasthradharanam (*wearing of new clothes*)

After the auspicious bath, the couple wear new clothes and are ready for Dhaana ritual



and Maangalya Dharanam. The clothes used by the couple at the time of abhishekam, cloth wrapped around Kalasams as well as the prathimas (icons) made of Gold/Silver, if any, placed over the respective kalasams, are given as dhaanam to purohits. Vasthra dhaanam is followed by other items, a list of which is given separately.

Kannadi la paakkardhu (*seeing in the mirror*)

This is a ritual which is observed to remove evil eye (*drishti*). In this ritual, both husband and wife (couple) hold a mirror (*kannadi*) together and see themselves in it. Once done, the mirror is offered to a brahmin.

Yennai la paakkardhu (*seeing in oil*)

This is yet another ritual similar to the previous one. Here the couple see themselves in oil kept in a iron vessel. In some families apart from the couple, the guests are also made to see in the oil. As in the previous ritual, the oil with the vessel is gifted to a brahmin.

Naandhi

In most of the families the ritual of Naandhi is performed at this juncture to invoke the blessings of all the forefathers.

Dhaanam (*Offerings*)

The types of Dhaanams (*offerings*) like Cow, etc. depend upon the customs followed in the respective families and the financial capability of the individual. Usually ten types of dhaanams are observed, these days they are generally replaced by cash. Some of them are :

1. *Go Dhaanam* - Offering of Cow, praying for peace/prosperity etc. (*Generally substituted by a Coconut and Go Moolya - price of a cow*).
2. *Bhoo Dhaanam* - Land for cultivation or dwelling is given,



praying for comfortable living. (Generally substituted by Sandal Wood piece)

3. *Tila Dhaanam* - Sesame (*black*) in a copper vessel or iron vessel is offered, praying for removal of all sins.
4. *Varaha Dhaanam* - Offering of Gold, praying for removal of all acquired sins.
5. *Gratha Dhaanam* - Ghee in a bronze vessel for pleasing all devathas is offered, praying for removal of sins, to be accrued.
6. *Vasthra Dhaanam* - Offering of Veshti with Uthareeyam (*Dhoti and upper cloth*), praying for good health and prosperity.
7. *Kula Dhaanam* - Offering of Jaggery, to please Goddess Lakshmi and seeking all prosperity.
8. *Roupya Dhaanam* - Offering of Silver, to please pithrus (*forefathers*) / Maha Vishnu seeking their blessings.
9. *Lavana Dhaanam* - Offering of Salt, to please Sri Rudra seeking good health.
10. *Nava Dhaanya Dhaanam* - Offering of grains. In this, each graham (*planet*) of the Navagrahas is invoked upon and nine types of grains are offered. Each graham has a respective color and dhaanyam associated with it. Before the beginning of this ritual, the dhaanyam specific for the graham along with a token of money, are placed on the colored cloth representing each graham. After invoking the particular graham, the grains are offered to a brahmin, praying for removal of dhrishti.

Significance: It is believed that when each of the items mentioned above are offered to a brahmin, the effects of dhrishti are transferred to that brahmin. He then gets rid of this extra dhrishti by doing additional puja, prayers, etc.

In addition to the above, Deepam (*Lamp*), Pusthakam (*a religious book*), Khantam (*a bell*), Vasthram (*cloth*),



and Udhaka Kumbam (*Brass or Copper vessel with water*) are also offered as *dhaanams*, seeking the blessings and good wishes of all devathas, purohits and elders. Bhoori Dhakshina (*offering of cash to the satisfaction of the Purohits*) and Phala Dhaanam (*fruits*) are also offered to scholars, elders and others who have graced the occasion.

In some places, in addition to the above, few more dhaanams are also offered. They are, *Salagramam*, *Sivalingam*, *Vibhoothi*, *Rudraksham*, *Phalaka* (*Wooden Plank-Seat*), *Chatra* (*Umbrella*), *Yashti* (*Walking Stick*), *Vyajanam* (*Hand Fan*), *Paadha Raksha* (*Chappal*), etc.

Maangalya Dharanam (*Muhurtham*)

Maangalya Dharanam, is the main event of the day, when the husband ties the Maangalyam to the wife, at the auspicious time (*muhurtha kaalam*). The children and youngsters are thrilled to see this event *which they could not see earlier, obviously*. As usual, the third knot is tied by the sister of the husband. The couple take the blessings of the elders while those younger are blessed by the couple. Due to the performance of all the rituals with utmost care and devotion, the blessings from the couple assumes added significance.

Concluding Rituals

The function concludes with Mahaa Aaseervadham from Purohits and elders present there. The rituals come to an end with Mangala Aarthi. After the customary exchange of gifts and pleasantries the relatives and guests are treated with a sumptuous lunch.

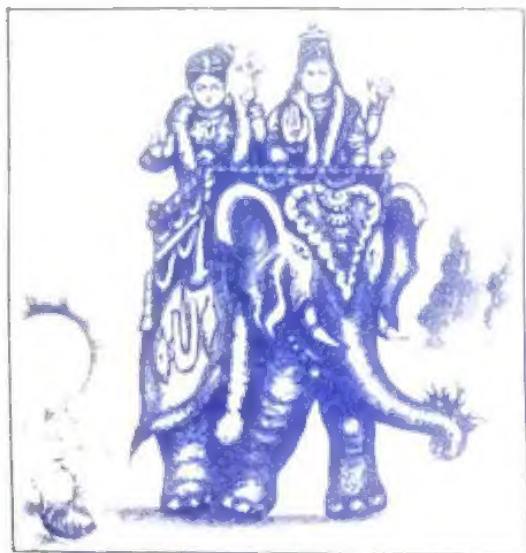
Conclusion

When the couple devotedly go through these rituals, there is immense peace of mind and rejuvenation of body and mind. The chanting of these manthras



provide them enormous mental strength to face the remaining life span with serenity and calmness.

May The Lord Almighty Bless one and all.



*sarve bhavanthu sukhinah: sarve santhu niraamayaah:
sarve bhadraani pasyanthu maa kaschid duhkhabhaag bhaveth:*



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